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P 030753Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8812

UNCLAS MADRID 000287

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN: CODEL KING DISCUSSES BILATERAL
COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION

¶1. Summary. A Congressional delegation headed by Representative Peter King (R-NY) met with Vice President Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega, Deputy Foreign Minister Bernardino Leon, Deputy Minister of Interior Antonio Camacho, and opposition Popular Party leader Mariano Rajoy to discuss U.S.-Spain cooperation in the War on Terror. King and other members of the delegation praised Spain's comprehensive response to terrorist attacks in its territory and its strong record in disrupting terrorist networks, including recent sweeps against groups sending suicide bombers to Iraq. Spanish interlocutors stressed Spain's active engagement in international efforts to counter the threat of terrorism, including through strong cooperation with the USG. Deputy Interior Minister Camacho said veteran terrorists returning from action in Iraq are a major concern for Spain and other EU countries. Vice President de la Vega and Camacho discussed the importance of improving coordination among Spanish security agencies to ensure a smooth flow of terrorism-related intelligence. End Summary.

¶2. The Congressional delegation that visited Madrid January 12-13 was comprised of:

- Representative Peter King (R-NY)
- Representative Donna Christensen (D-VI)
- Representative Mike Rogers (R-AL)
- Representative William Pascrell (D-NJ)
- Representative Michael McCaul (R-TX)

//MEETING WITH DEPUTY FM LEON//

¶3. Deputy Foreign Minister Bernardino Leon said that Spain has always had excellent cooperation with the U.S. on terrorism issues, and pointed out that given Spain's long history with domestic terrorism, the Spanish take both domestic and international terrorism very seriously. He said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) recently established a Terrorism Directorate as a focal point for dealing with foreign policy on terrorism and the GOS is participating in numerous international initiatives to counter terrorists. Many such initiatives were proposed by the U.S., such as the Financial Action Task Force, the Container Security Initiative, and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Spain would like to see PSI extended to North Africa, to Latin America, and to Sub-Saharan Africa, regions that need international support in the fight against terror.

¶4. Leon pointed out that Foreign Minister Moratinos was in Vienna for an IAEA meeting on Iran. He stressed that Spain had worked closely with the EU-3 on this issue, given Spain's historically close ties to Iran, and that the GOS had expressed its concerns to the Iranians and supported taking Iran to the UNSC in February.

¶5. The Deputy FM said that one of Spain's most important foreign policy goals was the passage of the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, and that the Spanish appreciated U.S. leadership in the UN on this issue. He also

called the delegation,s attention to the Code of Conduct on Terrorism passed by the EU-25 plus ten Mediterranean countries at the 10th Anniversary meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process) last November. The delegation expressed interest in seeing a copy of this document, which Leon had delivered later in the day.

¶6. Leon stressed that Spain,s counterterrorism strategy was a global one, focused on both intelligence and law enforcement cooperation and on institution building in the developing world. He outlined the new GOS strategies for Africa and Asia, which focus on helping the weaker states of these continents to develop laws and institutions to prevent terrorists from using them as a recruiting and training ground, and to bring those countries into compliance with international law.

¶7. Leon also discussed President Rodriguez Zapatero,s Alliance of Civilizations initiative (also a counterterrorism initiative in Spain,s view) describing it as intended to create an international environment in which terrorists do not have any means of legitimizing their actions with publics in the developing world.

//MEETING WITH DEPUTY INTERIOR MINISTER CAMACHO//

¶8. Camacho, accompanied by Manuel Valverde, head of Spain's National Antiterrorism Coordination Center (CNCA), and other top officials, told the Congressional delegation that the U.S. and Spain were working very well together in the fight against terrorism and that both sides always looked for ways to improve cooperation even further. Congressman King noted that both the U.S. and Spain were victims of major terrorist attacks and that there was a strong bipartisan interest in the U.S. in working with Spain to meet this common enemy.

King congratulated Camacho on Spain's arrest of 20 Islamist extremists earlier in the week on charges of recruiting suicide bombers to fight in Iraq (reftel). He said the delegation had been in Italy prior to visiting Spain and that Italian officials were pleased that Spanish police had tracked down the cell responsible for sending the suicide bomber who had killed Italian soldiers in Nassirya in a 2003 attack.

¶9. Camacho reviewed examples of USG-Spanish collaboration against terrorism, including the newly-established channel between the CNCA and the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center. He said international cooperation would have to be increased to meet the threat posed by fighters returning from Iraq. Congressman Rogers discussed the role of the U.S. 9/11 Commission and asked how Spain had organized its response to the Madrid train bombings and emerging Islamist threats. Camacho said that upon coming into office, the Zapatero government had seen the dire need to improve inter-agency cooperation so that at least one unit would have all available data on any given threat. He said Spain's institutional review of the train bombings had not been as comprehensive as the 9/11 Commission, but that one result was the creation of the CNCA under Valverde's leadership.

¶10. Congressman Pascrell asked how Spain was adapting from the historical threat posed by ETA to the global threat represented by the groups that orchestrated the Madrid train bombings. Valverde said that ETA was a difficult target, but at least it had an internal structure that could be attacked and weakened. By contrast, the new extremists are unified by radical Islamist ideology and do not respond to a centralized structure, making them far more difficult to counter. Valverde said that the key in Spain's view was to focus on improving intelligence capabilities in order to be able to disrupt terrorist networks before they acted.

¶11. Representative Christensen asked how Spain was conducting outreach to its Muslim communities. Camacho explained that the Interior Ministry did not have a direct role in such programs, but that security officials were careful to establish good working relations with Muslim leaders and to

emphasize that the authorities made a clear distinction between Islamist terrorists and the broader Muslim community.

Representative McCall asked whether increased North African immigration to Spain was being addressed through new immigration policies. Camacho noted that the existence of Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa were definitely a factor in Spain's counterterrorism posture, though here too Spanish authorities were careful to distinguish between illegal immigrants seeking a better life and extremist elements using migrant flows to cover their activities. He said Spain enjoyed good cooperation with Algeria and Morocco in countering both terrorism and illegal immigration.

//MEETING WITH SPANISH TERRORISM EXPERTS//

¶12. The Representatives had lunch with noted Spanish counterterrorism experts, including both government officials and academic figures. National Police Commissioner for Information (the police intelligence service) Telesforo Rubio discussed the efforts of the National Police to increase their knowledge of radical Islamist groups operating in Spain. On Spanish policy regarding privacy rights, Carmen Bujan, MFA Sub Director General for Terrorism Issues, said Spain prided itself on having achieved a balance between safeguarding civil liberties and confronting terrorist threats. She said legislation originally intended to help in the fight against ETA served equally against newer threats. CNCA Director Valverde noted that under Spain's legal system terrorism did not have a special category, but was instead treated as an organized crime phenomenon, greatly broadening the range of legal instruments that could be deployed against suspected extremists. Turning to Spanish views on U.S. management of the War on Terror, MFA Sub Director General for North America Manuel de la Camara said the debate surrounding the use of Guantanamo as a detention center, among other revelations, had significantly undermined Spanish public support for the U.S. approach.

//MEETING WITH PP LEADER RAJOY//

¶13. Popular Party (PP) leader Mariano Rajoy and PP International Relations Coordinator Jorge Moragas sketched out the PP's position on terrorism and the measures undertaken by the Aznar government between 1996-2004. They expressed dismay at the current government's tactics in dealing with domestic ETA terrorism, but acknowledged that it was working hard to counter the threat of international terrorism. Moragas dismissed Zapatero's Alliance of Civilizations as an attempt to justify terrorism. Chairman King thanked Rajoy for his party's close cooperation with

the USG while in government, and expressed the delegation's appreciation for the chance to hear from the opposition party. He noted that the U.S. has a responsibility to work with the democratically elected government currently in power, and that the U.S. was pleased with the cooperation the current GOS had provided on terrorism issues.

//MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT//

¶14. Vice President Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega cited Spain's "unfortunate" long experience with terrorism as the basis of its international activism on the issue. She said Spain's formula for confronting terrorism was a combination of demonstrating firm will through effective law enforcement and working with the international community to promote a common approach to a common threat. De la Vega said the Zapatero government was focused on improving internal coordination among its security services. Representative Pascarell noted the Vice President's professional history as a judicial official and asked whether she saw a need to change any laws to confront terrorism. De la Vega said Spain possessed solid legal structures, but needed to upgrade the technological infrastructure of both the judiciary and security services to improve the collection and sharing of terrorism-related information. She said that since the terrorists had access to real-time communications,

governments should enjoy the same capabilities. Vice President de la Vega underscored the Spanish government's commitment to work with the USG to ensure continued close cooperation to combat terrorism.

¶15. CODEL King cleared this cable.
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